

Advisory Committees

Advisory committees can be a helpful tool when planning new water conservation programs. Programs such as altering rate structures or public information and education campaigns are good candidates for an advisory committee. By including an advisory committee in your planning process, you have a better representation of your customer base and can address issues you and your staff may not have included.

Why have an advisory committee?

Advisory committees are based on the principle that those affected by a program should have a part, directly or indirectly, in formulating that program. Every water agency can benefit from an advisory committee.

Some of the values of an advisory committee to a water agency include

1. Committee members understand the program and support it *and the agency* in the community
2. A committee provides considerate advice
3. The advice received from a committee represents the community if the committee is representative of the community.

The primary functions of an advisory committee are

1. Formulation and recommendation of effective programs for water agencies
2. Evaluation of these programs as they are applied
3. Recommendation of needed revisions in existing programs

Some of a committee's responsibilities are

1. Determining the needs of the community
2. Evaluating the present programs
3. Studying the need for a program
4. Developing objectives for the program
5. Developing ways to evaluate the program
6. Helping to publicize the suggested program within the community

Some of the activities involved in implementing a long-term program are

1. Considering the facilities needed to develop and carryout the program
2. Considering ways of improving the agency's public relations

3. Supporting and sponsoring public education campaigns
4. Advising regarding content of the education campaign
5. Considering ways to improve the proposed program

Some of a committee's activities concerning evaluation of a program are

1. Giving opinions regarding results of specific aspects of the program
2. Considering how the various outcomes of the program might be measured
3. Assisting in the development of evaluation materials
4. Assisting in the development of an annual evaluation report

What a committee should NOT do

1. A committee is advisory to the agency- A committee should not be used as a pressure group
2. A committee is free to make recommendations, and the agency is free to accept or reject those recommendations
3. When recommendations are rejected, the committee should not attempt to pressure the agency by rallying support of the issue

The Advisory Committee MUST

1. Be representative of the community and utility customers
2. Meet regularly
3. Be properly sized for the program
4. Rotate terms of appointment
5. Hold structured meetings
6. Recognize community's effort

Leadership

Leadership is brought to the group by an individual who:

- Is open about committee concerns
- Obtains information
- Creates communication channels
- Engages the members
- Is respected

A leader of an advisory committee should:

- Define characteristic of the end-user
- Identify needs and expectations of the end-user
- Recommend program priorities
- Define scope and intensity of emerging issues
- Inform key decision makers of the importance of the program(s) and the need
- Inform the end-user of new or existing programs

Involved Staff

Involving your staff is an essential component in the success of the committee. If your staff feels informed and educated regarding member activities, then program implementation and acceptance will go more smoothly.

Committed Members

Not only does this include members who are committed to show up to meetings, but also includes people who are truly dedicated to the subject matter. A dedicated committee member engaged in the topics at hand is more important than a committee member who shows up to meetings and is unproductive.

Meaningful Work

Have a clear set of goals and expectations to make the work seem more meaningful. Work without direction will cause committee members to lose interest.

Enjoyable Meetings

Make sure the meetings are well organized and make good use of the time allotted. Changing locations, including refreshments, and providing occasional entertainment are all good ways to keep up the interest in the meetings.